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Osgood, J. "The Pen and the Sword: Writing and Conquest in Caesar's Gaul".
Classical Antiquity, Vol. 28, No. 2 (October 2009), pp. 328-358
doi: [10.1525/CA.2009.28.2.328](https://doi.org/10.1525/CA.2009.28.2.328).

Collection Permanent Link: <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/555441>

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The Pen and the Sword: Writing and Conquest in Caesar's Gaul

Julius Caesar was remembered in later times for the unprecedented scale of his military activity. He was also remembered for writing copiously while on campaign. Focusing on the period of Rome's war with Gaul (58–50 BCE), this paper argues that the two activities were interrelated: writing helped to facilitate the Roman conquest of the Gallic peoples. It allowed Caesar to send messages within his own theater of operations, sometimes with distinctive advantages; it helped him stay in touch with Rome, from where he obtained ever more resources; and it helped him, in his *Gallic War* above all, to turn the story of his scattered campaigns into a coherent narrative of the subjection of a vast territory henceforward to be called "Gaul." The place of epistolography in late Republican politics receives new analysis in the paper, with detailed discussion of the evidence of Cicero.

In memoriam Elizabeth P. McKibben and William T. McKibben

It was Julius Caesar's achievements on the battlefield, first against Gauls, then fellow citizens, that most conspicuously set him apart. Romans, who quantified military success as a way of counting up the blessings granted by the gods, naturally invoked numbers. Writing in the first century CE, Pliny the Elder

This paper is dedicated in fond memory to Betty and Bill McKibben, beloved teachers of Classics for many years at Grinnell College, and two people of peerless generosity. I was honored to deliver an earlier version of it as the McKibben Lecture at Grinnell in April 2007 and thank my hosts and the large and enthusiastic audience on that occasion. Further encouragement and assistance were offered by members of the Ancient Historians' Colloquium of the Atlantic States, where I also presented this paper in March 2008. I am especially grateful to David Levene, who gave a brilliant response at the colloquium, and to anonymous readers of this journal as well as Alain Gowing for a number of suggestions incorporated herein.

claimed: Caesar “fought fifty times in pitched battle, and alone surpassed Marcus Marcellus who fought thirty-nine” (*NH* 7.92). In Pliny’s mind, Caesar was fighting not just the enemy, but his own Roman predecessors, and handily outscored Marcellus, the great general of the Second Punic War. Though Pliny does not say it, by this count Caesar surpassed Hannibal and Alexander the Great too.

Yet in the very same passage of his encyclopedia, Pliny reports some quite different numbers: “We have been told that he (i.e., Caesar) was accustomed to write or read and dictate or listen simultaneously, and to dictate to his secretaries four letters at once on important affairs or, if he was doing nothing else, seven letters at once” (7.91). This was a part of Caesar’s legend too: he was remembered not just for his commentaries on the wars that he fought, but for an astonishing ability to produce floods of letters, even under trying circumstances. His Greek biographer, Plutarch, records: “by day Caesar would be carried round to the garrisons and cities and camps and have sitting with him one slave from those trained to write from dictation as he went along, and behind him one soldier standing with a sword” (*Caes.* 17.3). Other Romans similarly used sedan chairs, including Pliny the Elder, who thought it an obvious way to increase his own scholarly output.¹ But Caesar’s agent Oppius, in memoirs he wrote of the great man, remarked that Caesar even managed to dictate letters from horseback, during the Gallic campaign, when speed was of the essence; it required at least two secretaries to keep up.²

At first glance, Caesar’s records in these activities—making war and letter-writing—might both seem simply to be reflections of the man’s demonic energy, or his desire to excel in all realms. In this paper, focusing on the period of the Gallic War, I will suggest that there was a closer relationship between them. Simply put, writing helped to facilitate the Roman conquest of the Gallic peoples. It allowed Caesar to send messages within his own theater of operations, sometimes with distinctive advantages not offered by purely oral communication; it helped him to stay in touch and maintain intimate relations with Senators and other personal agents back in Rome, so that he could retain his command and obtain fresh resources; and it helped him, in the commentaries above all, to turn the story of his scattered campaigns into a grand and enduring narrative of how a vast territory now called “Gaul” was subjected to Roman rule. The commentaries, all agree, enhanced Caesar’s own position, but it is less remarked how much they shaped how northern Europe would be viewed in the future; the less literate societies Caesar fought, by contrast, were unable to leave a written version to influence the views of subsequent generations.

In arguing that writing facilitated the conquest of Gaul, I do not mean to suggest that it was the paramount reason for Roman success. There were, it will

1. Plin. *Ep.* 3.5.15–17.

2. Plut. *Caes.* 17.4 (cf. Suet. *Iul.* 56.5 for Caesar’s ability to write on the road). On Oppius’ memoir, see Townend 1987.

be suggested, other institutional factors at play, almost certainly of greater significance. Furthermore, research from a range of disciplines has demonstrated the substantial capabilities of non-literate societies: as writing is a versatile technology, so too are words delivered orally; and fairly elaborate types of accounting can be performed with little or even no writing.³ The advantages offered by writing, then, should not simply be assumed, but need to be explored, within the appropriate historical context, as I do in Part I below.⁴ A final qualification to the argument here is that Caesar was not the only Roman commander to make heavy use of writing while away from Rome. In fact, to a large extent customs already established required that he do so. The rich evidence for Cicero's governorship of Cilicia (51–50 BCE) provides a second detailed example and will receive discussion especially in Part II, where some aspects of the relationship between epistolography and politics in late Republican Rome are analyzed more fully than they have been before. Still, in some respects Caesar's situation was atypical, and he was an innovator in his use of writing, as is shown in both Parts II and III; and, to return to the point where we began, it also remains true that the essentially unparalleled scale of Caesar's military activity helped to generate an appropriately large output of writing, whatever his individual feats as letter-writer.⁵

I. WRITING IN GAUL

To understand fully the Gallic war, we must begin not in Gaul, but in Rome, in 59 BCE.⁶ Caesar had won a consulship for this year, along with M. Calpurnius Bibulus, a dim but fearless figure elected through a bribery fund subscribed to by Caesar's opponents including even Cato the Younger. By every means, this faction tried to prevent Caesar, once in office, from passing a law that would grant land to veterans of Pompey's wars in the east. (By now, Caesar had, as self-protection,

3. An excellent overview of the complex relationship between literacy and power, with reference to the ancient world, is offered by Bowman and Woolf 1994b. Note in particular the studies they cite (4 n.6), such as Larsen 1988. Essential for this subject is Harris 1989 and see also the papers in Humphrey 1991, Bowman and Woolf 1994a, and Cooley 2002, along with Woolf 2000.

4. Note the explicit invitation along these lines in Bowman and Woolf 1994b: 4.

5. Scholarly interest in Caesar, and his commentaries in particular, has revived in recent years. Osgood 2007a offers some general reflections on the trend; for work on the commentaries see, e.g., Welch and Powell 1998, Lieberg 1998, Walser 1998, Lendon 1999, Ramage 2001, 2002, 2003, Seager 2003, Krebs 2006, Riggsby 2006, Damon and Batstone 2006, and Kraus 2007. My own focus here is not on illuminating the author's narrative technique, but contextualizing a variety of his writings, including the commentaries, from the 50s BCE. (It should be noted that Osgood 2007b, a brief review of Riggsby 2006, anticipates some of the claims in this paper but they are developed more thoroughly here.) In Part III of the paper, I treat the commentaries as artifact, but earlier (especially in Part I) I try to use them, with all due caution, as a historical source that illumines other types of writing. New work on epistolarity which focuses on Caesar and Cicero has been especially helpful: see, e.g., Nicholson 1994, Hutchinson 1998, White 2003, Ebbeler 2003, Leach 2006, Jenkins 2006, Gunderson 2007, and Henderson 2007. For valuable collations of evidence see Cugusi 1979 and 1983.

6. Gelzer 1968: 71–101 remains the most useful account, providing full references to the sources.

made the notorious pact with Pompey and Crassus that is erroneously called the “first triumvirate.”) When it came time to vote, Caesar overwhelmed his colleague with violence, and Bibulus retreated to his house where he remained for the rest of the year, claiming that all public business transacted was illegal, because he was watching the skies for omens.⁷

At risk of being put on trial when he left office, Caesar obtained an extended command over Rome’s provinces in northern Italy and across the Adriatic; to these was soon added (this time, at least in principle, subject to yearly renewal) the small territory Rome ruled in southern France, Transalpine Gaul.⁸ The advantages afforded to Caesar by such a command were several (although, it must be kept in mind, of potentially differing value as events developed over the tumultuous 50s BCE). First, so long as Caesar held a province, he in theory remained immune from prosecution, a benefit especially valuable in the earlier years of his command.⁹ Further, to offset the controversial acts of his consulship and to enhance his prestige, it would be beneficial to rack up *res gestae* through military campaigning, culminating in a triumph.¹⁰ Concurrently, and in time-honored fashion, Caesar could use a (protracted) proconsulship to enrich himself, settling any debts and filling his coffers: but again, in his province that would encourage military campaigning, with all the opportunity it afforded for plundering.¹¹ Finally, from 59 BCE Caesar’s forces would (for several years anyway) be the only armies on the borders of Italy proper, a fact surely not lost on contemporaries and obviously well-known to Pompey in particular, who, by the later 50s BCE, would have his own forces in Spain and even, for a time, in Rome.¹² (Caesar, meanwhile, as he continued to fight, was able to recruit additional manpower in the rich countryside of northern Italy, which was part of his province.¹³) By the start of 58 BCE, then, everything already pointed to war, while in the years that followed there remained good reasons for Caesar to continue fighting.

Caesar might have intended first to campaign against the Dacians of modern Romania, but when the Helvetians revived a plan to leave their homeland (a plan which had briefly caused anxiety in Rome in 60 BCE), he found his chance in

7. Vell. Pat. 2.44.5; Suet. *Caes.* 20.1; Plut. *Caes.* 14.6, *Pomp.* 48.4; App. *B.Civ.* 2.12; Dio 38.6.5–6; Cic. *Vat.* 22, *Fam.* 1.9.7 = SB 20.

8. Suet. *Caes.* 22; Dio 38.8.5; Cic. *Vat.* 35–36, *Sest.* 135, *Prov. Cons.* 36–37, *Att.* 8.3.3 = SB 153.

9. On efforts to try Caesar see Badian 1974. In an important paper Morstein-Marx 2007 has cast serious doubt on the traditional view that Caesar’s actions on the eve of the civil war are to be explained by a fear of prosecution (for deeds of his consulship, or proconsulship). Still, in 59 BCE itself, when relations with Pompey appear to have come under strain, it must have seemed welcome to have extra protection; Pompey’s marriage to Julia was, of course, a further type of insurance.

10. Not least because Caesar had been forced in 60 BCE to forgo a triumph after his command in Spain: Suet. *Iul.* 18; Plut. *Caes.* 13.1, *Cat. Min.* 31.2–3; App. *B.Civ.* 2.8; Dio 37.54.1–2.

11. See, e.g., the discussions of Badian 1968: 89–91, Shatzman 1975: 53–67 and 348–50, and Will 1992: 66–71. Also see notes 20, 21, and 120 below.

12. See Cic. *Att.* 2.16.2 = SB 36, with, e.g., Syme 1944: 98 and Badian 1966. On Pompey’s forces, see Brunt 1971: 472, 451.

13. Brunt 1971: 466–67.

Transalpine Gaul instead.¹⁴ Carefully justifying this attack in the commentaries, since ensuing campaigns would stem from it, Caesar claims to have found a record indicating that some 368,000 migrants had started the move (*BG* 1.29). After a brief campaign, he also claims, he sent back only 110,000 (1.29). Caesar's own force, at the beginning of the war, was only about 20,000 legionaries, and reached a maximum size of twelve legions (or about 60,000 men). Yet with it, he waged campaigns throughout what he calls "Gaul," which covered the area of not just modern France but also Belgium, and parts of Germany and Holland, and he subdued its several million souls.

Huge numbers of captives were taken, perhaps hundreds of thousands.¹⁵ One people, the Atuatuaci, refusing to surrender, alone yielded 53,000 prisoners for the slave auction in 57 BCE, according to Caesar (*BG* 2.33). The Veneti were enslaved (3.15); the Nervii (6.3); the Menapii (6.6); and the people of Cenabum (7.11). Then, after the final victory over Vercingetorix, Caesar writes that he gave one captive to each soldier, so perhaps another 50,000 (7.89). Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands were likely slain too. At his triumph, Caesar boasted that the number of non-citizens killed in all his campaigns reached over a million—perhaps exaggerated, but good evidence anyway for how Romans measured success in war.¹⁶ In fairness, though, we should note that Pliny was appalled, and thought it a "great wrong . . . against the human race" (*tantam . . . humani generis iniuriam*).¹⁷ Gold, too, it was said, was robbed from the Celtic settlements or sanctuaries, in such great quantities that its price dropped in markets back in Rome.¹⁸ Analysis of Gallic coinage has lent support to the allegation.¹⁹ Caesar masks the scale of plunder in his commentaries, because, as we will see, far from allotting some to his soldiers and scrupulously reserving the rest for the Roman people, he was effectively using it to buy supporters.²⁰ But it could not be kept entirely secret.²¹

How was such a small force able to defeat so massive an enemy? It is important to remember, first, that Caesar was able to gain key allies in Gaul and use them

14. On the chronology of the campaign's start see the important new study of Thorne 2007. On the fears of 60 BCE, see Cic. *Att.* 1.19.2 = SB 19, 1.20.5 = SB 20.

15. Plut. *Caes.* 15.3 and App. *Celt.* fr. 1 both, in passages of statistics, give a million (cf. Vell. Pat. 2.47.1, implying a figure closer to 400,000). Pelling 1984: 89 argues convincingly that Plutarch and Appian's reports derive from Asinius Pollio's history of the period (see further n.127 below); their number may well be exaggerated, but all indications are that it was high. Sobering attempts to tabulate the human cost of the war are made by Will 1992: 96–104 and Goudineau 1990: 308–15.

16. Plin. *NH* 7.92 gives 1,192,000 (cf. Plut. *Caes.* 15.3, App. *Celt.* fr. 1, Vell. Pat. 2.47.1).

17. In a remarkable discussion, Canfora 1999: 132–39 calls Pliny's account of Caesar a "libro nero."

18. Suet. *Iul.* 54.2.

19. Haselgrove 1984; see also Woolf 1998: 42.

20. On the general's right to booty see now Churchill 1999, reviewing earlier scholarship. Note also the discussion by Linderski 1987 of M. Aurelius Cotta (*cos.* 74 BCE).

21. Cicero referred to it in a speech to the Senate of 56 BCE (*Prov. Cons.* 28) but implies that it is being reserved for Caesar's triumph. But cf., e.g., *Att.* 7.7.6 (= SB 130): "the riches of Labienus and Mamurra" (*Labieni divitiae et Mamurrae*).

against his foes: this was not a simple struggle between Romans and “natives.” Some of those people whom Caesar encountered, the Aedui and the Remi being just two examples, evidently hoped to use him in struggles against their own neighbors.²² And there were at least two other critical factors: first, Caesar had the advantage of superior military technology and knowledge.²³ His legionaries were uniformly well-protected with mail armor and helmets, and carried shields and deadly Spanish swords. They were frequently drilled, and trained collectively. They came from a culture that was used to long, sustained campaigns, and had ample experience in siege warfare. The peoples of Gaul, by contrast, were unlikely to have been so consistently well-armed; some might have had only a shield for defense. And while they did fight each other regularly in massed battles, they were less accustomed to extended wars, long sieges, or the construction of well-fortified camps.

Second, the peoples of Gaul, precisely because they were a collection of discrete and independent units prone to fighting one another, lacked the more centralized organization enjoyed by the Romans (even if that organization was coming under strain over the 50s BCE). There was no Senate to oversee the collection and distribution of the financial and military resources of a large territory; there was not even a commonly accepted political capital, like Rome, where coordinated decisions, such as the choice of a commander-in-chief, could be made.²⁴ Certainly, over the course of the war, the individual *civitates* of Gaul could, and did, come together for council meetings, where alliances were forged and decisions made—provided consensus was reached.²⁵ But it was a cumbersome procedure; leaders might bicker over strategy, and, as Caesar represents it, this cost time, especially in 52 BCE. Further, there was in Gaul no uniform system of levy, like the Roman *dilectus*, but instead a variety of arrangements for mustering manpower.²⁶ Well could Caesar boast, at the start of the sixth book of his *Gallic War* (6.1), how in one winter he acquired three new legions from northern Italy: the Romans had remarkable resources, Caesar is saying, and they could organize them with remarkable efficiency.

Hand in hand with this efficiency went writing, to which we now turn. At a minimum and most obviously, on a day-to-day basis writing allowed the Roman

22. *BG* 1.30–34, 2.2–5.

23. A good basic discussion is given by Goldsworthy 2006: 197–204. More details on Roman and Gallic armies of this time can be found in Goudineau 1990 and Goldsworthy 1996.

24. While Caesar refers (*BG* 6.13) in his Gallic ethnography to the annual meeting of the Druids in the territory of the Carnutes, nowhere else in the narrative is there any sign that policy was set on this occasion.

25. Some examples of councils, both of individual *civitates* and collective: *BG* 2.4, 2.10, 4.19, 5.6, 5.53, 5.56, 6.44, 7.1, 7.14, 7.15, 7.29, 7.63, 7.75, 7.89 (reading *concilio* here); cf. *BG* 1.30, 5.2, 5.24, 6.3. For the habit, see *BG* 6.20. The Gauls have *concilia*, the Romans, by contrast, a *consilium* (*BG* 1.40). Caesar’s subordinates are depicted formulating a strategy in a *consilium*, but not Caesar (*BG* 3.3, 3.23, 5.28).

26. See further Rawlings 1998, esp. 182–86.

army to keep track of and to organize its resources—through strength reports, duty rosters, and records of individual soldiers, as well as financial records, inventories, requisition orders, itineraries, daybooks, and the like.²⁷ The great majority of days were spent not in battle but in camps, or moving between camps, and for this logistics was crucial. At any moment, Caesar should, in principle, have been able to obtain a fairly accurate record of his manpower and his supplies, and this facilitated both immediate redeployment as well as longer-term planning. The keeping of written records also contributed to an ideal of accountability in subordinates.²⁸

Through writing was also recorded other information of value to Caesar and the Romans. A few decades before the great war, the Greek scholar Posidonius had traveled to the new Roman province in southern Gaul and incorporated an extensive ethnographical description into his history of over fifty books, which, with its vivid and forceful prose, powerfully underscored the differences in military capability between Rome and her subject peoples.²⁹ Prominent Romans visited the elderly Posidonius at his school in Rhodes, including Pompey, and Cicero even hoped the man would write an account of his consulship.³⁰ Caesar must have known Posidonius' work; it gave firsthand testimony of Gallic styles of fighting³¹ and made clear the basic features of intertribal politics that Caesar would exploit, as he played one group against another during his campaigns.³² It dangled a vision of rich treasuries of silver and gold, deposited in lakes by a god-fearing people (although Posidonius did throw some cold water on the notorious story of the "gold of Tolosa," alleged to have been stolen by the Gauls from Delphi).³³ And even if inaccurate in some details or out of date, Posidonius' writing was no less effective for that in tempting a would-be military victor.³⁴ Of course, oral sources, including possibly members of Caesar's own family, might have performed a similar function.³⁵

But within Gaul itself, during Caesar's command, writing also allowed information to be spread, and in ways that valuably supplemented oral communication. In particular, Caesar himself could split his forces and still operate with

27. Phang 2007 provides a good overview of military documents, focused on the imperial period. But by Caesar's day, given the complexity of enrolling legions and their lengths of service, salaries, and decorations, record-keeping must already have been quite advanced.

28. See again Phang 2007.

29. On Posidonius see above all Edelstein and Kidd 1989–99. On the Celtic ethnography see especially vol. 2, 308–10 with Nash 1976. Our sense of it is derived from the Greek writers Diodorus 5.25–32, Strabo 4.4.2–6, and Athenaeus 4.151e–152f, 4.154a–c, and 6.246c–d.

30. On Pompey, see Strabo 11.1.6; Cicero: *Att.* 2.1.2 = SB 21.

31. Fr. 68 Edelstein-Kidd.

32. Fr. 274 Edelstein-Kidd.

33. Fr. 273 Edelstein-Kidd. Posidonius' doubt concerned the Delphic origin of the Tolosan treasury. On *aurum Tolosanum* see also Cic. *ND* 3.74 and Gell. *NA* 3.9.7.

34. While on campaign, Caesar may have been reading Eratosthenes also: see *BG* 6.24.

35. Caesar refers (*BG* 1.12) to the activities in Gaul of his wife's great-grandfather, L. Piso (*cos.* 112 BCE).

a central command by sending irrefutably clear—and also confidential—written instructions.³⁶ At the same time, he could rely on similarly clear, and confidential, written dispatches from his commanders.³⁷ In the Latin of the commentaries, Rome's messengers, the *nuntii*, regularly come with letters, *litterae*; these should be envisioned as *tabellae*, small, light tablets made of waxed wood bound shut with string and sealed with wax impressed with a unique signet.³⁸ Whereas a messenger might garble his message, or (a more serious threat) willfully distort it, *tabellae*, sealed intact upon delivery, with their wax surfaces unaltered, were less vulnerable. A further advantage was that the messenger need not be told the contents of a message he carried, lest he divulge precious information; or a letter might be used to authenticate the identity of an otherwise suspect messenger. In Caesar's commentaries, we shall see, writing emerges as a technology that empowers Rome, alongside more obvious engineering marvels such as camps, siege works, and rapidly constructed bridges. But Caesar surely was not the only commander to use *litterae* as he did—Cicero, in accounts of his Cilician governorship, more than once conjoins mention of *litterae* and *nuntii*.³⁹

If at least something of the value of writing to Caesar, and to the Romans, is now clear, it still remains to be asked: what kind of writing, if any, did the Gauls have? And should the lack of it have been a very serious handicap? As to the first question, while Celtic culture had traditionally been purely oral and in Caesar's day still had no tradition of written literature, some of the Gallic peoples, notably in the south where there had long been contact with the ancient Greek colony at Massilia, chose to adapt other alphabets, especially Greek, for their own use—most conspicuously on their coins, but also for other basic types of documentation.⁴⁰ Caesar says as much in his famous discussion of the Druids, who themselves apparently refused to write down their lore, even as other public and private records were kept (6.14); he also claims to have sent a letter to one of the Gallic peoples in central France (1.26).⁴¹ Note, too, the Helvetian census mentioned above, a sign in Caesar's narrative that these people, at any rate, were capable of a highly organized movement. Elsewhere in the commentaries, though, we are given the impression that in some communities writing was less a part of day-to-day life, and the archeological evidence, inasmuch as it can, suggests that this is right. (The situation, though, over the course of the war may have been changing, as we shall soon see.)

36. *BG* 5.11: Caesar writes (*scribit*) to Labienus; *BG* 5.46: Caesar writes (*scribit*) to Labienus; *BG* 8.6: *litterae* of Caesar to Fabius; *BG* 8.11: *litterae* of Caesar to Trebonius.

37. *BG* 2.1: *litterae* from Labienus; *BG* 5.11: *litterae* from Atrius; *BG* 5.47: *litterae* from Labienus; *BG* 8.39: *litterae* from Caninius.

38. See especially *BG* 2.2, 5.11, 8.26. *Tabellae signatae* are specifically mentioned at *BAfr.* 3. The description of the opening of the sealed *tabellae* in *Cic. Cat.* 3.10 is especially illuminating here.

39. See, e.g., *Fam.* 15.1.1 = SB 104, 15.2.1 = SB 105, 15.4.7 (twice) = SB 110.

40. Woolf 1994 affords a good survey of the arrival of writing in northern Europe.

41. Note also the letters of the Catilinarian conspirators to the Allobroges of 63 BCE: *Cic. Cat.* 3.10–11; *Sall. BC* 44.1, 47.3.

Writing, then, was unlikely to have been a well-established way of spreading news from one community to the next through Gaul as the Romans moved across the landscape. News, according to Caesar (4.5), spread rather by rumors, which failed to provide full and accurate information about the invaders' doings and yet still were the basis for community decision-making. If true, this need not have been purely a disadvantage. It meant that no written communiqués could be intercepted; it meant that it was difficult to know if those captives who spoke to the Romans were telling the truth; and it meant, Caesar claims (4.5), that the Gauls made unpredictable decisions. Among the peoples of Gaul, as he represents it, information and misinformation flew around in a web of interrelations with no center, leading to constantly shifting strategies and alliances.⁴² For instance, after Ambiorix, leader of the Eburones, successfully destroys the winter camp of Cotta and Sabinus, he quickly enlists further allies with his exaggerated reports, and they swoop down on their next target before the Romans have learned what has happened (5.38). Still, assuming that Caesar is on the whole reliable on this point, the underlying disadvantage here was once again comparative administrative inefficiency more than a lack of writing *per se*. That is, *written* reports alone would not have solved all the Gauls' problems here. And, at the same time, while part of the Roman success in spreading accurate intelligence and orders among its commanders depended on writing, part of it also was due to a larger infrastructure of rapidly-moving messengers (see, e.g., *BG* 3.9, 5.10, 7.9, 7.41).

But there was a more salient disadvantage imposed by the less highly developed literacy of the peoples of Gaul. Once large numbers did decide to cooperate more fully against the Romans, while some records might have been kept along the lines of the Helvetian census, lack of experience with writing likely made their commanders less effective than they might otherwise have been. Although (according to Caesar) Vercingetorix could perfectly well receive reliable intelligence through messengers (e.g., 7.8, 7.16), it would have been a further benefit to be able to use writing to communicate confidential instructions (as well as intelligence) to one another when separated, as the Romans could. Writing could even allow a message to be smuggled across enemy lines, or into (and out of) a town under siege, in ways impossible for a purely oral society.

Caesar highlights this unique value of writing and also hints at the enemy's dawning awareness of it, in his gripping account of the entrapment of Quintus Cicero's camp at the end of 54 BCE, after the Romans' second invasion of Britain (5.39–52). Younger brother of the more famous Marcus Cicero, Quintus, along with his legion, were unexpectedly hemmed in by the Nervii and were unable to get a messenger to Caesar when all the roads were blocked. Those caught making the effort were tortured to death as a deterrent. Finally, one Nervian deserter in Quintus' camp induced a slave by promise of freedom and a large reward to

42. See, e.g., *BG* 4.5, 6.20, 7.1, 7.3, 7.59. Compare how Caesar puts down the gossip of traders at *BG* 1.39. On Caesar's use of intelligence in the war, see the study of Bertrand 1997.

carry a letter to Caesar. “He took it tied to a javelin,” we are told, “and passing without any suspicion, a Gaul among the Gauls, reached Caesar. From this man the dangers to Cicero and his legion were learned” (*has ille in iaculo inligatas effert, et Gallus inter Gallos sine ulla suspicione versatus ad Caesarem pervenit. ab eo de periculis Ciceronis legionisque cognoscitur*, 5.45). Caesar at once abandoned his camp and sent orders to his other commanders; one, after arriving, was told to guard what Caesar had been forced to leave behind, including heavy baggage, hostages, grain, and, tellingly, the *litterae publicae*, the official records (5.47). (These were important, among other reasons, because they could be called as evidence in the prosecution of an ex-governor.⁴³)

As Caesar approached Quintus’ camp he had to find a way to communicate with him and (according to his account) hit on an Odyssean scheme. He explains that with a large reward, he persuaded a Gallic horseman to bring a letter to Cicero, “written in Greek characters . . . out of fear that the letter might be intercepted and our plans become known to the enemy” (*Graecis conscriptam litteris . . . ne intercepta epistola nostra ab hostibus consilia cognoscantur*, 5.48). If he failed to make it into the camp, the man was to tie the letter to a javelin and throw it over the rampart. He did so, and it stuck into a tower, only to be discovered two days later. Its message that Caesar was on the way with legions gave a needed boost in morale, and allowed Cicero, as the Gauls came to meet Caesar, to send his own letter back, through the same messenger he had used before. Thus warned, Caesar slowed his advance and was able to fortify a camp in a strong position.

In this episode from the commentaries, skill in writing not only gets a crucial message to Caesar, it also allows the Romans a psychological, and ultimately a tactical, advantage in the struggle with the Nervii. It allows them to convey intelligence through *Gallic* messengers, who could pass unnoticed more easily but might not have been trusted had they delivered a message orally. Yet the “Greek characters” Caesar claims to have used in his message to Quintus suggest that the Gauls, even in the north, were coming to grips with writing in Latin—or at least might have relied on a prisoner to read a Latin message. The use of Greek language, if that is all Caesar’s phrase “Greek characters” (*Graecis . . . litteris*) means, was functioning, then, as a sort of code: once both sides could read the same language, some kind of encryption was necessary.⁴⁴ And once both sides could write it, the playing field was more equal yet, even if it meant that some of the peoples of Gaul were starting to become more Roman, and lose something of their old, distinctive cultures. Though writing had been spreading well before

43. See Crawford 1996: no.1, line 34 (the *lex repetundae* mentions *litterae publicae* here) and Cic. *Flac.* 21; see Butler 2002: 36–39, but this discussion misses the significant reference in Caesar, which weakens the argument offered there.

44. So Bannert 1977 interprets *Graecis . . . litteris*. As Bannert points out, Dio 40.9.3, in his account of the episode, interprets it similarly, but it could be that *Graecis . . . litteris* points to some more complicated cipher (on which see further below). Dio also guesses that Caesar was concerned not to let the messenger himself know the contents of the message, lest he divulge it if captured.

Caesar's arrival, the great war must have given it a new impetus. The process likely intensified in the two decades of civil war that followed, in which many Gauls served as auxiliaries in the massive armies fielded by rival contestants for power, and in the years after that, when everybody in the Roman world had to re-acculturate in response to the jolting new figure of the emperor.⁴⁵ The disruption of Roman society in these years, as has been argued, had a profound impact on all provincial cultures in the west, but for Gaul in particular 58 BCE was the critical turning-point.

II. WRITING TO (AND FROM) ROME

Letters allowed Caesar to communicate intelligence within Gaul, but they also allowed him to send reports of his doings back to Rome—most importantly, to the Senate—giving his own version of events. (Whether others could send back more critical accounts is a question to which we shall return.) It was customary during any war for the general to send such dispatches to the Senate (when reporting victory, in the traditional form of waxed wooden tablets, which conveyed an idea of fixity that ordinary paper, of papyrus, did not).⁴⁶ Two such dispatches are preserved among the letters Cicero sent from Cilicia, giving at least some sense of typical contents and tone; the magistrate's sense of duty, in particular, is prominently on display.⁴⁷ These letters were welcome exercises in enhancing one's *dignitas*, certainly not to be missed by Caesar, already by 58 BCE a past master in the art of self-promotion.⁴⁸

Additionally, given the outrage he had provoked in some members of the Senate during his consulship, it was prudent for Caesar to provide justification for his activities as proconsul; any perceived wrongdoing, or even simply a lack of activity, might be used as a pretext for terminating his governorship at a time not of his own choosing. Even before the final split with Pompey, the future of his command was at times unclear, especially in 56 BCE, when a tribune tried to recall Caesar to stand trial, a candidate for the consulship (the quite unmilitary Domitius) pledged to remove Caesar from office, and the Senate debated whether to deny funding to Caesar's new recruits and strip him of command in both Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul.⁴⁹

45. For Gauls in the armies of the civil war, see especially Drinkwater 1978. On the lifetime of Augustus as the critical period for "Romanization" in the west, see various writings of Woolf, e.g., Woolf 1998: 1–23 and Woolf 2001, as well as MacMullen 2000. Osgood 2006 emphasizes the global impact of Rome's civil wars as a critical factor. For a later example of the army's spread of writing into a frontier zone, see Bowman 1994.

46. Good discussion of the governor's *litterae* at Rambaud 1953: 19–43. See also the classic paper of Fraenkel 1956 on their traditional style, detected in other texts. On the *tabellae* of the *imperator*, see Halkin 1953: 80–83 and Meyer 2001.

47. *Fam.* 15.1 = SB 104, 15.2 = SB 105.

48. As, e.g., his aedileship had shown: Gelzer 1968: 37–38.

49. Suet. *Iul.* 23–24.1; Cic. *Prov. Cons.* 17, 28; *Fam.* 1.7.10 = SB 18; *Balb.* 61. On the tribune Antistius see the important study by Badian 1974. While, as Morstein-Marx 2007 argues,

While the dispatches fail to survive, they must have been masterpieces of their kind. They would, in anticipation of any future criticism, have justified specific decisions, such as the betrayal in 58 BCE of Ariovistus, whom Caesar himself as consul had seen made “Friend and Ally of the Roman People” only the year before, or the detention of ambassadors from the Usipetes and Tencteri in 55 BCE, a violation of the *ius gentium*, as Cato apparently insisted at a meeting of the Senate.⁵⁰ In general, they must have made Caesar’s doings seem, superficially at least, dutiful, mindful of the public interest, and fundamentally in keeping with the traditions of the Republic, even as he furthered his own cause too. They would, in this respect, have been like the commentaries.⁵¹ Indeed, the imperial biographer Suetonius notes that Caesar appears to have been the first to render his dispatches into the form of a note book (*memoralis libellus*) arranged into columns, to facilitate (we may surmise) ready consultation and quotation of his (compelling) version of events should it become necessary—and also to increase his prestige.⁵² While the governor’s *litterae* were a highly traditional form, and individually Caesar’s *litterae* might have been traditional too, this *memoralis libellus* would seem to represent a significant Caesarian innovation, a work still extant in Suetonius’ day.

Interestingly, one report does survive of a letter written by Caesar during the war that backfired in its purpose, and the report reinforces our conclusion here.⁵³ After Cato’s call to turn Caesar over to the German enemy for violating the rights of their envoys (a traditional punishment for such a violation of the *ius gentium*), Caesar, according to Plutarch, wrote to the Senate denouncing Cato in a most insulting fashion. This provided Cato with an opportunity to denounce Caesar in turn and reveal his “true” plans in Gaul, urging that “it was not the sons of Germans or Celts whom they must fear, but Caesar himself, if they were in their right minds” (οὐ Γερμανῶν οὐδὲ Κελτῶν παῖδας, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνον αὐτόν, εἰ σωφρονοῦσι, φοβητέον ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς, Plut. *Cat. Min.* 51.3–4). A negative letter, this episode suggests, opened Caesar to criticism by provoking a counter-attack: it was better to dwell on his own achievements.

Caesar’s well-constructed, and positive, dispatches helped him to retain his command, presumably by impressing less partisan Senators, and certainly by

Caesar was quite unlikely by the end of the Gallic War to be prosecuted successfully for deeds of his proconsulship, Morstein-Marx does implicitly admit (161) that it was important for Caesar, especially in the early years of his governorship, to give an acceptable account of his actions.

50. On the status of Ariovistus, see Caes. *BG* 1.35; Dio 38.34.3. On Cato on the violation of the ambassadors, see Plut. *Cat. Min.* 51.1–5, Caes. 22.4; App. *Celt.* fr.18; cf. Caes. *BG* 4.1–15, esp. 13. On *ius gentium* and ambassadors, see Pomponius’ commentary on Mucius, cited at *Dig.* 50.7.18; for one discussion, Broughton 1987: 53–54. Gelzer 1968: 131–32 supplies further elucidation.

51. Cf. Riggsby 2006: 191–216.

52. Suet. *Iul.* 56.6: the passage raises many problems, on which see especially Ebbeler 2003 (but Ebbeler fails to cite such important discussions as Turner 1978: 32 and Roberts and Skeat 1983: 18–20); see also now Meyer 2004: 190–91. Note the *volumen* of Atticus’ letters in Cicero’s possession from which numerous extracts can be cited (*Att.* 9.10.4–10 = SB 177).

53. Plut. *Cat. Min.* 55.1–15, with the discussion of Gelzer 1968: 131–32.

giving his allies material to work with: Cicero referred to them in the debate of 56 BCE.⁵⁴ In this crucial year, Caesar was finally able, in spite of the moves against him, to hold on to his command; he also obtained authorization for additional staff officers and funding for the four new legions he had recruited (amounting to around 24 million sesterces). Since he was already paying for these from his plunder, this was in essence pure profit for him and could be used, perfectly legally, on (say) lavish building projects in Rome that would win public favor and help him keep his command.⁵⁵ In three other years, in response to his dispatches, the Senate voted in recognition of Caesar's success the unprecedented number of fifteen or twenty days of thanksgiving to the gods.⁵⁶ These thanksgivings were important to generals in the Republican period, because they often led to a triumph being awarded on return to Rome; their increasingly extravagant length redounded to the general's immediate reputation as well.⁵⁷ They were highly visible: throughout the city, men, women, and children, garlanded and in their best attire, went in procession to the temples of the gods where prayers were made and wine, incense, and sacrificial animals offered.

Cicero worked tirelessly for a generous thanksgiving after a minor victory in his province of Cilicia in 51 BCE, and still preserved is part of the epistolary campaign he fought to achieve it, worth noting here because, besides containing examples of the commander's *litterae* to the Senate, it also reveals some limitations inherent to those *litterae*.⁵⁸ In the extant correspondence, we find the two dispatches to the Senate defending Cicero's conduct early in his governorship, and we also learn that more followed.⁵⁹ Yet we also find separate letters, magnifying his achievements, addressed to his friend Atticus, not a Senator but a political force to be reckoned with, and to Caelius, a key ally of Cicero in the Senate.⁶⁰ Another letter yet is written to Cato, who was known to be stingy with military honors, and so Cicero scales back his account to suit his crabby correspondent.⁶¹ A further pair of extant letters simply request the help of the new consuls of 50 BCE (each referring to a final dispatch, now lost, composed by Cicero), and in fact Atticus is told that Cicero had written to "everyone" ex-

54. Cic. *Prov. Cons.* 22, 33; cf. 25, 27. See also Dio 39.25.2.

55. On funding, see Cic. *Prov. Cons.* 28, *Fam.* 1.7.10 = SB 18, *Balb.* 61; Dio 39.25.1. On the estimated cost of a legion see Crawford 1974: 696–97.

56. Note the mention of *litterae* and supplications at *BG* 2.35, 4.38, 7.90.

57. See especially Cic. *Prov. Cons.* 25–26; Halkin 1953 is the standard treatment, and see now Hickson-Hahn 2000 and 2004.

58. Details can be found in standard biographies of Cicero; note also Wistrand 1979 and the spirited discussion of Beard 2007: 187–99.

59. For the extant dispatches to the Senate, see n.47 above (and note Caelius' recommendation that Cicero send a dispatch, *Fam.* 8.10.2 = SB 87, as well as Cicero's explanation to Cato for *not* writing a dispatch: *Fam.* 15.3.2 = SB 103); report of a later dispatch: *Fam.* 15.10.1 = SB 108, 15.13.3 = SB 109.

60. Letter to Atticus: *Att.* 5.20 = SB 113; letter to Caelius: *Fam.* 2.10 = SB 86.

61. Letter to Cato: *Fam.* 15.4 = SB 110. See the perceptive analysis of Wistrand 1979: 10–18 and Hutchinson 1998: 86–100.

cept two Senators.⁶² (Such canvassing proved to be important: a famous letter from Caelius back to Cicero [*Fam.* 8.11 = SB 91] reveals how much politicking Caelius had to perform in order to get the Senate to pass the thanksgiving.) Another number of extant letters still addresses other matters of concern to Cicero.⁶³ To stay alive politically, whether in regard to the vote of a thanksgiving or indeed a myriad of matters, the senator had to be in touch separately with his colleagues at home. Caesar was not the only proconsul busily writing back to Rome.

Still, the fact was that letters, in large quantities, were instrumental in allowing Caesar to stay away from Rome for nearly nine years to wage his great war. Without them, his position would have been more precarious. Though he did meet with important Romans in northern Italy during the winter recess from campaigning—this was another advantage his province furnished—Caesar (like Cicero) carried on an elaborate correspondence at all times.⁶⁴ He kept abreast of all affairs in Rome with regular reports from his agents (including Oppius) that contained (Cicero says) *omnia minima maxima*—an interesting anticipation of an even more elaborate infrastructure to be created by Augustus.⁶⁵ He then could send instructions back and also use letters to keep up ties of friendship and patronage, a function they increasingly had to play in an expanding empire.⁶⁶ Letters made up a kind of dialogue, through which affection, resentment, hostility, indeed a gamut of emotions, could be expressed—sometimes in ways that face-to-face interaction did not permit.⁶⁷ Letters, as one subtle reading has put it, are a medium for creating “shared virtual space” for communication.⁶⁸ To be sure, for managing Caesar’s affairs, letters alone were not enough; as Caelius’ missive to Cicero about the thanksgiving shows, friends had to be on hand in Rome to carry out important day-to-day business and handle urgent matters. And Caesar notoriously had his supporters: Suetonius (*Iul.* 23.2) reports that Caesar went so far as to require

62. The letters to C. Marcellus and Paullus (suggestively different) are *Fam.* 15.10 = SB 108, 15.13 = SB 109. Comment to Atticus: *Att.* 7.1.8 = SB 124.

63. E.g., *Fam.* 2.9 = SB 85; 15.7–9, 12 = SB 99–102; 13.53, 55, 56 = SB 129–31.

64. See, in general, White 2003 and Ebbeler 2003, whom I mostly will not cite further though they make some points similar to mine in this and the following two paragraphs.

65. For the established courier service to Caesar, see *Q. fr.* 2.11.4 = SB 15; 2.13.3 = SB 17; 3.1.8, 10 = SB 21, etc. On Oppius, see *Q. fr.* 3.1.8, 10 (source of quotation), 13, 18 = SB 21; *Att.* 4.16.8 = SB 98, 5.1.2 = SB 94, etc. Compare the bulletins Cicero expects Crassus was receiving at this time while away on his Syrian command (*Fam.* 5.8.3 = SB 25), those Cicero says Tiro produced for Quintus (*Q. fr.* 3.1.10 = SB 21), and those Cicero himself received in Cilicia through Caelius’ help (*Fam.* 8.1.1 = SB 77, 8.2.2 = SB 78, etc.). On Augustus, see Suet. *Aug.* 49.3.

66. A classic example is the so-called *litterae commendaticiae*, the “letter of recommendation,” a practice well entrenched in Caesar’s day, as Cotton 1985 demonstrates.

67. As Cicero himself wrote on one occasion: *epistula enim non erubescit* (*Fam.* 5.12.1 = SB 22). Recent close readings of Ciceronian letters, e.g., Leach 2006, Gunderson 2007, and Henderson 2007, explore how this dialogue works; I do not attempt this kind of analysis here but it should be kept in mind how supple a form the letter is.

68. Henderson 2007.

his allies to take oaths and issue bonds; other devices—most generously called financial incentives—were suspected at the time and have been ever since.⁶⁹

All told, though little survives now, the number of Caesar's letters to the Senate and to individual Romans was tremendous. Recall the testimony cited at the start of this paper; the bulky *litterae publicae* left behind in the rush to aid Quintus Cicero might have included personal correspondence as well (5.47). Overall, there were mountains of letters to be kept track of, and it seems for at least part of the war, Caesar appointed Pompeius Trogus, a Roman citizen of Celtic origin whose father was enfranchised by Pompey, in charge of an "office" of correspondence with control of the signet; the job may also have been held by Aulus Hirtius, who wrote a final book to complete Caesar's commentaries.⁷⁰ Sometimes Caesar would have such men write for him, yet he was quite prolific himself:⁷¹ during the short second invasion of Britain he found time to write no fewer than three letters to Cicero.⁷²

In fact, Caesar's epistolary relationship with Cicero can be traced in detail and is valuable for showing how such a relationship could work; it also casts a flood of light on the travel of news to and from Rome more generally.⁷³ By early 54 BCE, Cicero and his younger brother Quintus made a plan to strengthen their relations with Caesar, by sending Quintus to Gaul.⁷⁴ It seems that they agreed that after securing Caesar's help, Quintus would aim for a consulship, and Marcus perhaps for a priesthood.⁷⁵ Quintus, though, apparently harbored his own separate plan of getting rich in Gaul.⁷⁶ Marcus would have thought military glory more important than monetary gain, but Quintus had debts to pay off and was also undertaking renovations on his properties.⁷⁷ In exchange for Caesar's help, the brothers could offer their respective services. Quintus would function as one of his commanders during the second invasion of Britain. Marcus would help Caesar's allies in the courts; he also decided to pen an epic that would describe Caesar's invasion of Britain, with material to be supplied to him, of course, through letters,

69. On these "incentives," see Suet. *Iul.* 27.1, 29.1, etc.

70. For Pompeius Trogus, see Justin. 43.5.12 (not specific on date, but the Gallic War seems very likely; cf. the interpreter Cn. Pompeius mentioned at *BG* 5.36); for Hirtius, see *BG* 8 *praef.* On Cicero's "office" (especially in the period after the Gallic War), see Malitz 1987, as well as Gelzer 1968: 133–36.

71. On Caesar's use of epistolary middle-men see White 2003: 75–80.

72. *Q. fr.* 3.1.17, 25 = SB 21; *Att.* 4.18.5 = SB 92.

73. For this relationship, see, in addition to White 2003, Lossmann 1962 (focusing on *amicitia*).

74. Cic. *Q. fr.* 2.11–14 = SB 15–18 show the execution of the plan. Important light is cast retrospectively by *Q. fr.* 2.15.2–3 = SB 19, 2.16.1 = SB 20, 3.6.1 = SB 26.

75. Wiseman 1966 cleverly deduces Quintus' consular aspirations, but Shackleton Bailey is right to observe *ad loc.* that *Q. fr.* 2.14.1 = SB 18 and *Q. fr.* 3.5.2 = SB 25 may divulge Cicero's hope for further *honores* too. Enhancement of either brother's *dignitas* would reflect well on the other. For a skeptical view see Mamoojee 1992.

76. See esp. *Q. fr.* 2.6.1 = SB 26, and cf. *Q. fr.* 3.1.23 = SB 21.

77. For his debts: *Q. fr.* 2.15.3 = SB 19; for renovations: *Q. fr.* 3.1.1–6, 14 = SB 21; 3.2.3 = SB 22; 3.3.1 = SB 23; 3.7.7 = SB 27.

written by Quintus.⁷⁸ (An epic *Bellum Sequanicum*, written by Varro Atacinus, had almost certainly already appeared, covering the war with Ariovistus in 58 BCE.⁷⁹) Naturally, all these services would also in principle redound to the reputation of the Cicerones themselves (although one might suspect that Caesar privately harbored the thought that Cicero's writing of a poem for him demonstrated a client-like subservience).

The extant letters Marcus wrote to Quintus, along with other letters from the year, show this unfolding exchange of services facilitated by correspondence. It was through letters that the new relationship started, with Quintus winning his appointment to Caesar's staff and, so it seems, Marcus a loan of 800,000 sesterces from Caesar that he was struggling to pay off years later.⁸⁰ Through further letters of recommendation, Cicero secured coveted positions on Caesar's staff for several associates, including the effete jurist Trebatius Testa, who was not to find life in Gaul to his liking.⁸¹ Caesar in turn benefited from Cicero's willingness (apparently in response to a specific request) to stay in Rome and function as an advocate, even during a heat wave so terrible that Cato held hearings without tunic or sandals and finally took ill.⁸² Caesar also benefited from Cicero's work in negotiating contracts for several of the extravagant building projects he was planning in Rome.⁸³ Even as the letters facilitated this exchange of services, they can also themselves be seen as an exchange of services, inasmuch as letters, through their contents and through the time and effort put into writing them, can pay a compliment to their recipient. In other words, letters did not just arrange *officia*; a letter was virtually an *officium* itself.⁸⁴ Though of course Caesar's letters largely fail to survive, through Cicero's correspondence we glimpse how Caesar stayed alive politically and prospered, even when campaigning on the distant shores of Britain. Though uniquely known to us, and remarkable because of the literary talents of those involved, this correspondence of Cicero, Caesar, and men on Caesar's staff (including Quintus), was otherwise typical.

78. On Cicero's activity in the courts see especially *Q. fr.* 2.16.1 = SB 20. The first hint of the epic is *Q. fr.* 2.14.2 = SB 18; for subsequent references and discussion see Allen 1955 and Byrne 1998. Quintus also for a time essayed his own poem.

79. Courtney 1993: 235–38.

80. For the establishment of new relationship through letters, see *Q. fr.* 2.11.4 = SB 15. On the loan, see this same letter and *Att.* 5.1.2 = SB 94, 5.4.3 = SB 98, etc.

81. For Trebatius, see *Fam.* 7.5–18 = SB 26–39; on coveting of positions, see esp. *Q. fr.* 2.14.3 = SB 18.

82. Request: *Q. fr.* 2.14.2 = SB 18 (*ut iste me rogat*); advocacy: *Q. fr.* 2.16.1 = SB 20, 3.1.1, 15 = SB 21; *Att.* 4.17.4 = SB 91; Asc. 29 Clark; Plut. *Cato Min.* 44.1. Especially irksome was the defense of Cicero's old bête noire Vatinius, which Caesar specifically requested (*Q. fr.* 2.16.3 = SB 20, *Fam.* 1.9.19 = SB 20, etc.).

83. On the expansion of the Forum and rebuilding of the Saepta in (very costly) marble, see *Att.* 4.16.8 = SB 89.

84. Note especially Cicero's mention of a "letter from Caesar full of friendly regard, attentiveness, and charm" (*Caesaris litteris, refertis omni officio, diligentia, suavitate*, *Q. fr.* 2.14.1 = SB 18).

Cicero's letters are invaluable, too, because they allow us to examine what Caesar chose to emphasize in the letters he sent back to Rome, including those to the Senate. Reading between the lines, we can modify Caesar's account in his *Gallic War* of the second invasion of Britain in which Quintus Cicero participated.⁸⁵ Caesar, it emerges, had suppressed crucial information gleaned during his rapid visit to the island the year before. Romans knew virtually nothing about Britain, but imagined that, like the other edges of the earth, it should be replete with riches that could fill their treasury or line their pockets—pearls, for instance.⁸⁶ Indeed, it might have been one reason why Caesar went there in the first place (prolonging his command and the glory of reaching, and perhaps annexing, a new land were quite possibly others).⁸⁷ His first expedition yielded nothing in the way of booty and failed to reveal any good protected harbor for landing a large fleet; Caesar does not mention any of this explicitly in his commentaries, and (it seems) concealed it in other communications too. Quintus (and Marcus) only discovered the truth after Quintus joined Caesar's staff. As Cicero wrote to his friend Atticus in June 54 BCE, "it is ascertained that the approaches to the island are walled with wondrous masses. Moreover, it is now known that there isn't an ounce of silver in that island nor any hope of plunder apart from captives" (*constat . . . aditus insulae esse muratos mirificis molibus. etiam illud iam cognitum est, neque argenti scrupulum esse ullum in illa insula neque ullam spem praedae nisi ex Mancipiiis*, *Att.* 4.16.7 = SB 89). And earlier, he wrote to Trebatius, perhaps with some satisfaction, "In Britain I hear there is neither gold nor silver" (*in Britannia nihil esse audio neque auri neque argenti*), and goes on to joke that Trebatius should bring back one of the remarkable chariots in which the Britons fought (*Fam.* 7.7.1 = SB 28).

What Caesar was planning to take back, the letters show, were captives, most to be sold into slavery for a profit, a few of the more exotic ones to be saved for Caesar's triumph.⁸⁸ But the invasion, which required five legions, did not go as intended, as even Caesar had to admit in his commentaries. Thanks to murmurings of rebellion in Gaul and then adverse winds, the crossing got off to a late start, only around 6 July (by the Julian calendar).⁸⁹ Further, a day after the Roman arrival, the fleet was mauled by a channel storm. That cost time—and, we can surmise, it threw a wrench into the plan to bring back captives. Caesar had to return to the coast and spend ten days or so overseeing the repair of as many ships as possible and the construction of a naval camp; he also had to order his diminished forces in

85. Studies are numerous, but Rice Holmes 1936: 326–50 and 678–735 retains its value, especially for chronology (adopted here).

86. Cf. Suet. *Iul.* 47.

87. Caesar himself never actually states the aim of his first expedition, only an exaggerated pretext (that the Britons had helped the Gauls militarily "in almost all the Gallic campaigns" [*BG* 4.20]). And of the second invasion, we hear nothing at all.

88. See especially *Att.* 4.16.7 = SB 89.

89. For the date, Rice Holmes 1936: 728–30.

Gaul to devote all their time to constructing new vessels. And during his absence, the British peoples were able to make a pact among themselves and appointed the wily Cassivellaunus as their commander.

An initial letter from Quintus, describing the crossing, apparently fired his brother with inspiration:

o iucundas mihi tuas de Britannia litteras! timebam Oceanum, timebam litus insulae; reliqua non equidem contemno, sed plus habent tamen spei quam timoris . . . te vero ὑπόθεσιν scribendi egregiam habere video. quos tu situs, quas naturas rerum et locorum, quos mores, quas gentis, quas pugnās, quem vero ipsum imperatorem habes!

Q. fr. 2.16.4 = SB 20

How welcome was your letter from Britain! I was afraid of Ocean, afraid of the coast of the island. What remains I do not underrate; but it offers more hope than fear . . . But you, I see, have a splendid subject to write up: what topography you have, what natural phenomena and places, manners, peoples, battles, and finally the commander himself!

Here, as elsewhere in Cicero's letters to Quintus, one might wonder if there is a tinge of irony, possibly intended for the benefit of Caesar himself.⁹⁰ Certainly further letters arrived with little to report: indeed, during the delay brought on by the gale, Quintus had time to indulge his favorite hobby of writing tragedies.⁹¹ (They cannot have been very good, as he notoriously managed to write four in just sixteen days!⁹²) In the end, thanks to their late start, Caesar and his troops had only a few weeks against the Britons. Wintering in Britain was impossible, because of the likelihood of fresh trouble in Gaul. Caesar may already have been planning the return to the continent by 5 August, on which date (a letter of Cicero tells us), having left his army, he was back at the naval camp (without Quintus).⁹³ Caesar omits this visit from his commentaries, presumably because nothing of note happened during it, and he did not wish to suggest that he was contemplating a return before it was clear that a settlement had been made.⁹⁴ For it seems that it was only afterwards, that, with his confederacy unraveling and many of his men taken captive, Cassivellaunus sued for peace. The Romans, in consequence, took

90. Henderson 2007 suggests, in his close reading of *Q. fr.* 3.1 = SB 21, that Caesar is to be seen as the ultimate addressee of Marcus' letters to Quintus; this perhaps underestimates matters of relevance only to Quintus in the letters, but the basic idea that Cicero was writing with Caesar as a possible addressee has much to recommend it: see further below.

91. In a letter Quintus dispatched from Britain 16 July (10 August pre-Julian), there was (Cicero writes back) nothing to report except completion of the tragedy *Erigona* (*Q. fr.* 3.1.13 = SB 21, cf. 3.1.22 = SB 21).

92. *Q. fr.* 3.5.7 = SB 25.

93. *Q. fr.* 3.1.25 = SB 22. It may be that the attack of the Kentish kings on the naval camp (*BG* 5.22) triggered Caesar's visit, but the larger concern still would have been the state of the ships.

94. At *BG* 5.23, Caesar implies that he only returned to the coast when the settlement with Cassivellaunus was achieved.

some hostages, and an annual tribute was fixed. It was not much of a victory, certainly less dazzling than some had hoped. As Cicero explained to Atticus, “I received a letter . . . from brother Quintus and from Caesar, sent from the coasts of Nearer Britain on the 25th of September [29 August by the Julian calendar]. Britain done with, hostages taken, no booty, a tribute, however imposed, they were starting to bring back the army from Britain” (*a Quinto fratre et a Caesare accepi . . . litteras datas a litoribus Britanniae proximae a. d. VI Kal. Oct. confecta Britannia, obsidibus acceptis, nulla praeda, imperata tamen pecunia exercitum ex Britannia reportabant*, *Att.* 4.18.5 = SB 92). Ensuing difficulties with the return crossing meant that even many, if not all, prisoners had to be left behind.⁹⁵

Quintus was bitterly disappointed at the lack of plunder, he had to admit, though it seems that ultimately Caesar did find him some captives, whom Quintus offered to share with his brother.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, Marcus’ epic had stalled. He did, on Quintus’ urging, finally finish it, during supplications to the gods after terrible floods of the Tiber late in the year.⁹⁷ The timing was poor: the poem drew attention to Caesar’s frittering away of time in Britain, while the Gallic insurgency strengthened. And, after all, it might seem that its particular theme, in contrast with the *bellum Sequanicum*, did not merit so lavish a treatment. It is unlikely that it ever circulated. As the commentaries and letters together show, Caesar was not completely dishonest about Britain. After all, he had to justify why the campaign had little to show for itself. He was unlikely to seek a thanksgiving for this year, which made it less necessary to be impressive. Yet he still could omit details, which only insiders such as his new confidant Marcus Cicero would have been privileged to learn.

The whole episode, then, shows how Caesar controlled the flow of information to Rome, especially in the short run, from his distant theater of operations. The Senate was told one story; Cicero learned a few more facts only because his brother was in Caesar’s camp. But he would be discreet, as he wished to retain Caesar’s good will, and to criticize the campaign would undermine Quintus’ reputation. Yet even so, there were further limitations on what Cicero could find out. Like their commander, anyone serving with Caesar who wrote back to Rome was unlikely to give the most objective account of the ongoing campaigns. Military men would inflate, which is precisely why Cicero begged the lawyer Trebatius for news, perhaps half-jokingly: “I should wish you keep me informed of the course of the Gallic war: for the less warlike my informant, the more inclined I am to trust him” (*tu me velim de ratione Gallici belli certiolem facias; ego enim ignavissimo cuique maximam fidem habeo*, *Fam.* 7.18.1 = SB 37). And Trebatius was certainly

95. *BG* 5.23.

96. *Q. fr.* 3.7.4 = SB 27. Trebatius too seems not to have acquired as much as he had hoped (see esp. *Fam.* 7.9.2 = SB 30, 7.17.1 = SB 31, 7.16.3 = SB 32).

97. On the floods, see *Q. fr.* 3.5.8 = SB 25; Dio 39.61.1–2; on supplications, *Q. fr.* 3.6.3 = SB 26.

not warlike: he had even managed to skip out on going to Britain. “Keen as you are for swimming,” Cicero teased, “you had no wish for a dip in Ocean or to watch those charioteers” (*neque in Oceano natare volueris studiosissimus homo natandi neque spectare essedarios*, 7.10.2 = SB 33).

But even had men with Caesar wished to send unvarnished reports, there was a further problem. It was Caesar’s many letter-carriers, plying the roads to and from Rome, who would deliver the mail, and it was clear to all that privacy might not be respected.⁹⁸ And if (say) Cicero wanted to get a message to Quintus, he would normally have to go through Caesar’s agents in Rome, such as Oppius, who we are told organized packets of mail to be sent to Caesar, along with the densely packed news bulletins.⁹⁹ Only occasionally would the chance arise for Cicero to use one of his own trustworthy associates to deliver a message (and on one occasion, we know, it was missed).¹⁰⁰ Precisely for this reason, the extant letters of Cicero probably are more guarded than they first seem, or at least rely on some very subtle writing to get their point across, and it was presumably only with Quintus’ return that the full story of Gaul might emerge. Cicero can only hint at the difficulty, when he writes to Quintus: “I also advise you not to commit to a letter anything that, if published, would be annoying to us. There are many things that I prefer rather not to know than to learn at some risk” (*etiam illud te admoneo, ne quid ullis litteris committas quod, si prolatum est, moleste feramus. multa sunt quae ego nescire malo quam cum aliquo periculo fieri certior*, *Q. fr.* 3.6.2 = SB 26).¹⁰¹

In one instance, it seems, a more secret letter made it to Cicero, from Trebatius, carried by Lucius Arruntius, who may have been less well-disposed to Caesar.¹⁰² Trebatius told Arruntius that Cicero was to tear the letter up as soon as he read it, and the letter itself contained a similar injunction. Cicero claims that he did destroy it, but also complains that it was not at all informative, its contents so unsurprising that it could have been read at a public meeting. (This might suggest that letters, including those of Caesar, were regularly read to the people of Rome.¹⁰³) Whatever Arruntius had written, Cicero’s comment shows the danger: if a more hostile letter reached Rome, it could be circulated in the hope of discrediting Caesar, but might

98. On the lack of privacy: *Q. fr.* 3.1.21 = SB 21; *Q. fr.* 3.6.2 = SB 26 (quoted below); *Q. fr.* 3.7.3 = SB 27. On the whole matter see Nicholson 1994.

99. For Oppius and his packets: *Q. fr.* 3.1.8, 13 = SB 21.

100. Missed opportunity of Hippodamus’ departure: *Q. fr.* 3.1.21 = SB 21.

101. Should Caesar in some way be a possible addressee of the letter, such a warning might actually function as an advertisement of Cicero’s discretion, or cover for any offense caused, or even a subtle rebuke of Caesar.

102. *Fam.* 7.18.4 = SB 37.

103. Note Cic. *Dom.* 22 for Clodius’ reading of a letter purportedly by Caesar at a *contio*. At a minimum, Caesar’s dispatches were very likely read to the people at *contiones* after the Senate voted him *supplicationes*: cf. Halkin 1953: 83–87 with evidence for the practice from an earlier period.

thus jeopardize the political prospects of its sender.¹⁰⁴ A true enemy perhaps would not have any qualms, but then Caesar would have avoided appointing such a person to his staff in the first place, and from the start Caesar had made sure to have control of the appointment of his legates.¹⁰⁵ (But there could, of course, be long-term undercover agents.¹⁰⁶) Once again, we see, getting the truth back proved surprisingly difficult. Cato and his friends, if they wished to criticize Caesar for the military deeds of his governorship before his return, to a large degree had to rely on Caesar's own version of events: this would explain why Cato seized on the report concerning the detention of the German ambassadors.

Cicero's insistence on discretion to Quintus raises a final question. If letters could fall into the wrong hands, was Caesar not afraid that his own confidential messages to his agents, potentially discrediting to himself and certainly useful to his foes, might be nabbed? If the Nervii could intercept a message, why not Romans? Here a precious passage from Aulus Gellius shows that this was a fear. Gellius writes:

libri sunt epistularum C. Caesaris ad C. Oppium et Balbum Cornelium, qui rebus eius absentis curabant. in his epistulis quibusdam in locis inveniuntur litterae singulares sine coagmentis syllabarum, quas tu putes positas incondite; nam verba ex his litteris confici nulla possunt.

NA 17.9.1–5

There are volumes of letters of Gaius Caesar to Gaius Oppius and Cornelius Balbus, who were in charge of Caesar's affairs in his absence. In certain parts of these letters are found single characters not joined up to form syllables, which you might think were placed there carelessly, for no words can be formed from these characters.

The correspondents, it emerges, had previously made a secret agreement to encode their most sensitive messages. It took real detective work to sort it out later.¹⁰⁷ The grammarian Probus, in fact, wrote a whole book on the subject, a "very careful piece of work" (*commentarius satis curiose factus*) Gellius says, *On the Secret Meaning of the Letters Appearing in the Epistles of Gaius Caesar*. Clearly this was not an easy cipher to break, suggesting that there was a real danger if the messages were leaked, and this illustrates the converse of my main point: correspondence could unmake Caesar, just as it made him. Encrypted messages doubtless were more important during the civil war, but they would have come in handy before.

104. Compare how Cicero makes use in *Phil.* 13 of a letter Antony sent to Hirtius and Octavian.

105. On legates, see Cic. *Vat.* 35–36; *Prov. Cons.* 28; *Fam.* 1.7.10 = SB 18; *Balb.* 61.

106. Was Labienus sent by Pompey to keep an eye on Caesar? Note that according to Cic. *Q. fr.* 3.6.2 = SB 26, Labienus had his own *tabellarii* separate from Caesar's. See the classic paper of Syme 1938. Also note that Caesar (*BG* 1.44) has Ariovistus claim that messengers from Caesar's enemies have been in touch with the German leader.

107. Suet. *Iul.* 56.6 reports a simpler cipher, probably too simple to have been effective.

III. WRITING FOR POSTERITY

Whatever ciphers Caesar (and his agents) employed, let us end by turning to a final type of writing important to him, and to the subsequent history of Europe, his commentaries. As with his letters, much here was traditional: literary works had long been used by Roman aristocrats to celebrate their achievements, not least on the battlefield (Naevius' *Clastidium*, Ennius' *Ambracia*, and Archias' poem on Lucullus are but three examples).¹⁰⁸ Just a few years before Caesar's war, Theophanes of Mytilene had accompanied Pompey on the final war against Mithridates and, suitably enough for the Roman Alexander, wrote up an account in Greek of the campaigns even before Pompey returned to Rome.¹⁰⁹ And Caesar himself, of course, was the subject of the *Bellum Sequanicum* of Varro Atacinus, as well as an elaborate epic on the Gallic War in at least eleven books written by Furius Bibaculus.¹¹⁰ There also was, by Caesar's day, a tradition of Roman statesmen writing autobiographically, often later in their careers and in apologetic vein (the memoirs of Rutilius Rufus is the classic example here).¹¹¹ Inhabiting a rich world of stories—depicted in paintings, referred to on coins, staged in plays, and written down in literary works—Roman politicians were keen to have their own story spread too, in their own lifetimes and beyond.¹¹²

In Caesar's day men such as Cicero, Brutus, and even Bibulus played the old game with new moves—a published cycle of consular orations (or a self-authored epic *On His Own Consulship*), a treatise *On Virtue*, and “edicts” which in style reminiscent of Archilochus berated a colleague.¹¹³ Caesar's *Gallic War* also represented an innovation, from at least several points of view. First, it was his peculiar achievement to fuse what had been largely separate traditions of elaborate celebration of recent military exploits and autobiographical writing. That is, Caesar was his own Theophanes, writing in Latin. This holds true, regardless of whether, as some believe, the commentaries were released year-by-year throughout the campaigns (which itself would represent a further, extraordinary innovation) or, as an alternative view holds, only after the great battle with Vercingetorix in

108. On the *praetextae*, see, e.g., Flower 1995. Archias: Cic. *Arch.* 21 with Berry 2004 for a discussion. Habinek 1998 is a wide-ranging, and seminal, exploration of the relationship between Latin literature and political power.

109. Cic. *Arch.* 24 with Gold 1985 for a discussion.

110. *Bellum Sequanicum*: see above, n.79. On the epic of Furius Bibaculus: Courtney 1993: 195–200.

111. Bömer 1953 and Riggsby 2007 provide discussions.

112. Wiseman 2004 is a rich summation of much work on this world. A few recent discussions of Rome's culture of exemplarity are to be found in Roller 2004, Hölkeskamp 2004, and Bücher 2006.

113. Cicero: *Att.* 2.1.3 = SB 21 for consular orations and Courtney 1993: 156–73 for the epic with Steel 2005; Brutus' *On Virtue*: Cic. *Fin.* 1.8, *Tusc.* 5.1; Sen. *Helv.* 9.4–8; Bibulus' edicts: Suet. *Iul.* 9.2, 20.1, 49.2; Cic. *Att.* 2.19.5 = SB 39, 2.20.4 and 6 = SB 40.

late 52 or 51 BCE (or just possibly 50 BCE).¹¹⁴ One way, or the other, they were basically written on the spot—just as the treatise *On Analogy* was said to have been composed while Caesar was traveling over the Alps from northern Italy into Transalpine Gaul.¹¹⁵

And while, if released serially, the commentaries helped Caesar throughout the long years of fighting, even as a single work in 51 BCE they would have been of value to him. Critical reports could make it back to Rome, even if it has been shown that it was more difficult than has sometimes been believed. Rumors did too—or could be invented (which is another reason why dispatches to the Senate were so important).¹¹⁶ Curio the Elder was able to include allegations of misconduct in a pamphlet he wrote before his death in 53 BCE.¹¹⁷ Now other hostile works had appeared against Caesar already in his consulship, and he had answered them by publishing afterwards three speeches *Against Domitius and Memmius*.¹¹⁸ The commentaries were another literary counterblast to the critics in the war of words, surely more detailed than the letter which Caesar wrote to the Senate at the very end of 50 BCE, enumerating all the benefits he had bestowed on the *res publica*.¹¹⁹ They implicitly argue that Caesar had good reasons for acquiring ever more legions, and that his war had other objectives than that, ones of genuine value to the Roman people; and they mask much of the plundering, an activity not of course itself illegal and indeed highly traditional, but subject to legal regulations as well as customary views about how it should be used.¹²⁰ When Catullus wrote that Caesar's officer Mamurra now had "all the fat that long-haired Gaul and remotest Britain used to have" (*quod Comata Gallia / habebat uncti et ultima Britannia*, 29.3–4), well should Caesar have taken measures to reconcile the poet: such epigrams stirred mortifying suspicions that even now are hard to shake.¹²¹

The very form of the commentaries, it should also be noted, further enhanced Caesar's achievement. Dispatches to the Senate, even if bound into a book, might still seem ephemeral; and they might, if written in a traditional manner, almost make Caesar himself seem more traditional than he might have liked—and also unduly concerned with the Senate at the expense of the Roman people as a whole.

114. For a summary of the controversy surrounding publication see Riggsby 2006: 9–11. Riggsby 2006 is an excellent discussion of the larger ideological dynamics of Caesar's narrative, so I confine myself to only a few comments here.

115. Suet. *Iul.* 56.5.

116. On rumors in late Republican political life, see Laurence 1994. For rumors about Gaul, see *Q. fr.* 3.3.1 = SB 23; *Fam.* 8.1.4 = SB 77.

117. Cic. *Brut.* 218.

118. See testimony in Malcovati 1953: 393–94. Note especially the formulation of Suet. *Iul.* 73.1.

119. Caes. *BC* 1.1; App. *B. Civ.* 2.32; Dio 41.1.

120. See Churchill 1999; for a fine specimen of invective against a commander's inappropriate disposition of his plunder see Cic. *Pis.* 86–94 *passim* (a passage implying that *praeda* was regulated by Caesar's own *lex repetundarum*).

121. On Caesar, Catullus, and the *versiculi de Mamurra*: Suet. *Iul.* 73. See now Konstan 2007 for possible contextualizations.

A fuller account of the war, written in a way increasingly akin to history proper (though not identical to history), and without explicit addressee(s), helped to turn it into a grand and lasting achievement, a *monumentum* that celebrates a new kind of exemplary Roman. In it, Caesar starts out very much as a Marius. He averts the threat of migrants in the north, defeating the Helvetii and also the Germans under Ariovistus. Yet as the narrative continues, Caesar moves beyond Marius to become something of a Pompey too. Fighting at the colorful edges of the earth, across the Rhine and in Britain, in lands with strange animals, dark forests, and men painted blue with mustaches, Caesar, like Pompey, meets new peoples and imposes Roman order. By the final book, as the return to Rome starts to loom on the horizon, Caesar has become his own exemplar. He has his own hallmarks—Caesarian speed, for instance, and Caesarian clemency (except for the intransigent).¹²² There is also, even more notably, the strong (and, depending on one's point of view, potentially worrisome) relationship with his soldiers, who, sharing their commander's bravery, have their *own* exploits highlighted in some of the book's most remarkable passages.¹²³

Along with form went style. As much as he aggrandized himself, Caesar would not make the mistake Cicero likely did in the British epic—or in the notorious poem Cicero wrote on his own consulship with its obtrusive boasting. Caesar would eschew the flights of a Cicero or any poet, and even the *verborum iactantia* one could expect from a commander's pen.¹²⁴ Economical of the truth, though probably not full of blatant lies, the commentaries, with their reasonable tone, were hard to contradict. Their seeming lack of artifice made them persuasive. So, too, did Caesar's brilliant use of the third person, such a familiar a feature of the work that we forget its novelty (though in fairness, we should note that Cicero had already employed the same device in the poem on his consulship, i.e., it was a third person autobiography too).¹²⁵ To be sure, one of Caesar's officers, Asinius Pollio, afterwards asserted that the commentaries were written carelessly, and full of mistakes.¹²⁶ This may be directed more at the account of the civil war, but traces of what Pollio, in his history of the period, wrote of the Gallic War can be detected in Plutarch and Appian, and it appears that he corrected at least some points of detail.¹²⁷

Cicero came much closer to appreciating their genius, when he did Caesar another favor by praising them in his history of Roman oratory: ostensibly a source

122. Ramage 2003: 339–41 and 350–51 reviews Caesarian *celeritas* and *clementia* respectively.

123. E.g., those concerning the chief centurion P. Sextius Baculus (*BG* 2.25, 3.5, 6.38).

124. *Verborum iactantia*: Tac. *Agr.* 39.1.

125. Steel 2005: 32 and 146. The notorious line *o fortunatam natam me consule Romam* is likely to have come from a speech.

126. Pollio's judgment is given at Suet. *Iul.* 56.4. For it and the verdicts of Cicero and Hirtius (discussed below) see the stimulating comments of Kraus 2005 and Pelling 2006.

127. See especially Pelling 1984 for likely traces of Pollio's version of the Gallic War preserved in Plutarch and Appian.

for future historians, the commentaries (Cicero says) could not be bettered. "He has kept men of any sense from touching the subject," Cicero continues, "for in history there is nothing more attractive than a pure, clear brevity" (*sanos quidem homines a scribendo deterruit; nihil est enim in historia pura et illustri brevitate dulcius*, *Brut.* 262). Caesar has not just written a version of the Gallic war, he has written *the* version, fending off other efforts to tell the story in a way less useful to him. To be sure, others eventually did make an attempt to speak more darkly of political motives and consequences. Pollio included a somber, but not unfair, analysis along these lines; and a more shadowy writer, Tanusius Geminus, attached significance in his history to Cato's effort to have Caesar turned over to the Germans after his detention of the envoys.¹²⁸ (Whether Tanusius gave a full account of the war is uncertain.) But for much of the time, Pollio appears to have followed Caesar closely, and, to judge by the *Periochae* (104–8), Livy did as well; Caesar succeeded to large degree in controlling the record.¹²⁹

The obvious success of the commentaries did not just cast Caesar's deeds in the best light possible; as Cicero suggested, it won him immediate renown for his *literary* achievement as well, a point too easily neglected in all the scholarly worry about their veracity. Elegant and simple, the commentaries, Aulus Hirtius adds (in another contemporary verdict), were written "easily and swiftly" (*facile atque celeriter*, *BG* 8 *praef.*). And since one cannot better them, and since they were incomplete, Hirtius goes on to imply, it was more profitable instead to finish them. Caesar's apparent lack of effort, in this version, bestows on him a total superiority: this is a Roman who writes as superlatively as he fights. Most definitely not the product of any long retirement, the commentaries helped already in Caesar's own lifetime to weave that important strand into his exemplary status too, important for those who valued literary culture.

Obviously, if Caesar wrote and released the *Gallic War* only in 52 or 51 BCE, the work cannot have helped him directly in Gaul; but this does not mean that the commentaries were without significance for the fate of the Gallic peoples. For the fact was that by the end of 52 BCE, the Roman conquest of Gaul, much less its provincialization, was not complete. There was not only the campaigning, sometimes arduous, of the following year; in the two decades following Caesar's death "rebellion" (as the Romans termed it) broke out more than once and had to be suppressed; and through the early principate, the Rhine had to retain a dense concentration of legions not just to hold off invaders, but also to keep a watch on the Gauls.¹³⁰ This determination to continue Caesar's military work must owe

128. On Pollio's analysis, see Pelling 1984. Tanusius Geminus: Suet. *Iul.* 9.2, Plut. *Caes.* 22.3, Sen. *Ep.* 93.11.

129. How Pompeius Trogus, the son of Caesar's secretary, treated the war is unknown, but Justin's *Epitome* for books 43–44 suggests that at any rate he traced the development of civilization in Gaul back to contact with the Greek colonists at Massilia, whereas for Spain Augustus is given substantial credit: see further Yarrow 2006: 97–99.

130. See, e.g., the survey of Goudineau 1996, esp. 489 and Woolf 1998: 29–34.

at least something to the commentaries themselves. In them, from the first page on, Caesar had memorably redrawn the map of Northern Europe, creating a vastly enlarged Gaul to be held by Romans, a territory firmly separated by the Rhine River from the largely artificial creation of “Germania.”¹³¹ The conception took hold, and was respected by succeeding generations. What is more, the strong sense to emerge in the monumentalizing *Gallic War* that Caesar’s was the final (if long) war between the Romans and the Gauls, with a result that should be permanent, made it unthinkable for his namesake successors, beginning with Augustus, even to contemplate neglect of Gaul, whatever the price exacted by maintaining standing legions on the Rhine.¹³² The commentaries were a key part of Caesar’s legacy.

And they not only sealed the fate of the peoples of this new “Gaul,” but also shaped the destinies of those beyond. Just as there was only room for literary successors to add to Caesar’s commentaries, rather than to replace them, so his political heirs, following the example of this new kind of Roman imperialist and less fettered by constitutional checks, would wage their own, additional, wars of conquest. Augustus may ultimately have been foiled in his plan to annex Germany to the Elbe (or beyond), but Claudius and his successors, directly inspired by the *Gallic War*, did succeed in conquering part of Britain, while Trajan turned to the alleged designs on Dacia and Parthia—with, of course, mixed results. Julian the “Caesar” took inspiration from his namesake in the fourth century CE in his own Gallic wars, and—to skip far ahead—the *conquistadores* would a millennium after that, in a New World whose destiny also was to be shaped by the inheritance of Caesar and his writings.¹³³ Armed with pen and sword—and books—they found inspiration in the past, if not an exact model for their own victories. Hailed as a literary masterpiece by contemporaries and ever since, the *Gallic War* also runs as a dark thread through the rest of Roman history and beyond, enabling Caesar to be remembered and to inspire, in a way that Marius, Pompey, and the others have not. And so again the story is told, or rather written, without a word from the Gallic foes to contradict. But we can at least acknowledge that Caesar achieved all that he did in Gaul not only with sword in hand but also his pen.

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131. Walser 1956 is the classic discussion. See now Riggsby 2006: 21–45 and Krebs 2006. Habinek 1998: 151–69, though focused on Ovid, has much relevant insight.

132. On the war as final struggle see Riggsby 2006: 194–95; note also Damon and Batstone 2006: 39–40.

133. On the spell Caesar cast through the ages see now Wyke 2006 and 2007; for Caesar in the New World specifically, see Lupher 2003.

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